

**Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder**

“Management of the National Parks and the Parks of the Southwest”

**Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy,
and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform**

October 13, 2005

Good morning, and thank you for joining us today. This is the fifth in a series of hearings focusing on the critical issues facing the National Park Service. I would like to welcome all of the Members of Congress who have joined us today, and who care deeply about the National Parks.

Given the great diversity of national parks in the United States, managing these sites is a daunting task indeed. Each park unit has unique demands that require a close examination of each unit's mission, strengths, and weaknesses. It is imperative that the National Park Service carefully examine each park to determine the best possible way to manage any given unit.

Over the past few years, the National Park Service has worked on a comprehensive catalogue of park units, backlogged projects, and asset inventory. These analyses are important if the parks are to be managed appropriately and efficiently. Any examination of a park's mission, management, and functions cannot be without controversy. As we have seen, recent proposals have met with vigorous opposition, and have sparked equally vigorous debate – and rightly so.

My hearings, and their resulting report, aim to examine the National Park Service, and ultimately make proposals and recommendations. I am sure that it too will not be without controversy; but if the National Parks are to survive and be a source of recreation and inspiration to future generations of Americans, then we must do all that we can to maintain them and make them better.

In addition to management of the National Parks, this hearing will examine the Parks of the Southwest. Most notable among the parks of this region is Grand Canyon National Park. Among the most popular and recognizable of all the national parks, it is natural that we should hold one of our hearings here.

As fitting as it is for us to have a hearing here, it is just as fitting that we are joined by one of the Grand Canyon's Congressmen, Rick Renzi. Also, I would like to welcome Congressman Mike Turner of Ohio, who is a Member of the Committee. Both of these gentlemen appreciate the parks, and are working to ensure they survive and thrive for many, many years to come.

I would like to also welcome our witnesses. Our first panel consists of Richard M. Frost, the Associate Regional Director Communications and External Relations for the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service. Mr. Frost will be testifying on behalf of the Park Service. He will be joined during the question period by Joe Alston the Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park and Palma Wilson the Superintendent of the Flagstaff Area Monuments.

On the second panel, we have Deborah Tuck from the Grand Canyon National Park Foundation, Bob Keiter, representing the National Parks Conservation Association, Kimberly Spurr of the Arizona Archeological Council, and Rick Smith, formerly with the National Park Service. Welcome to you all.